



BUILDING AND MAINTAINING GOODWILL IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In order to foster a positive public perception of historic preservation within the community, a commission must go beyond its regulatory role and conduct broad community outreach.

The benefits of doing so are numerous and long-lasting. Through consistent and quality public outreach, a commission can grow appreciation and enthusiasm for local history and its preservation. This is critical to the public's understanding of the commission's work the importance of preservation in the community. A well-informed public is a commission's greatest asset and can be their greatest supporters. The greater a commission's public support, the greater its political support will be.

•**Consider a preservation workshop series.** Host local or regional talks on various preservation topics and invite experts to present. Consider partnering other local organizations or land-use boards.

•**Host guided walking tours** of the historic district, or create a self-guided walking tour brochure or mobile app.

•**Install signage for the historic district.** A few signs at the entrances to the district can let people know they are somewhere special and valued by the community.

•**Welcome newcomers with a letter** from the commission, and make sure they know where to go for copies of historic district maps, regulations, design guidelines, and applications.

•**Be a resource for property owners.** Collect the names of contractors and handouts for where to find recommended materials and make them available online and at the building permit counter.



•**Build a good relationship with the realtors in your community.** Invite realtors to a commission meeting and inform them of the benefits of being in a historic district. Give them a map showing the district boundaries, the ordinance, and any design guidelines that apply. Walk them through your application process.

•**Keep the commission's website updated.** Include the ordinance, regulations, rules of procedure, design guidelines, applications and instructions, calendar of meetings, minutes from previous meetings, and educational materials. Sample or exemplary applications and projects can also be helpful.

•**Be a visible part of local government.** Attend town council or select board meetings and keep informed on all of the happenings in the community. Share at meetings and public hearings on the importance of integrating preservation into larger community planning and zoning topics. Be sure to be loud and proud about your successes and compliments received!



•**Share your work with elected officials annually.** This is a necessary part of educating elected officials about the work of the preservation commission. This is also an opportunity to give the elected officials credit for the accomplishments of the commission.

•**Make a slideshow or PowerPoint presentation** of positive projects that have been successfully completed in the district and emphasize the commission's role. Present the slide show to other land use boards and elected officials and make it available to the public and local media. Before and after photos of successful projects tell a wonderful story.

•**Recognize good preservation work in the community** – both large and small. Start an awards program with the local non-profit preservation organization or join one already in place.

•**Attend annual training events.** Before commissioners begin to consider educating their community and public officials, they must first educate themselves. In addition, all commissioners should be good spokespersons for preservation and be able to defend and make the case for historic preservation. Annual training can help commissioners stay apprised of new preservation methods and issues, and maintain their knowledge and expertise. Look for programs sponsored by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, and National Alliance of Preservation Commissions.

•**Recognize that the Commission's role is to manage and encourage thoughtful change in the district,** not creating a time capsule of buildings. All communities go through growth and change. Managing and providing for thoughtful change can take the form of updating your design guidelines in response to new technologies like solar panels or considering the use of appropriate modern materials for repairs or new construction, among many other things. If the commission is sure to adapt to the changing needs of the district's residents and buildings, they can help their district continue to evolve in way that honors its history.

